

SPORTS REVIEW

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Wrestling

1980 ANNUAL

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**Special Issue:
THE YEAR IN REVIEW**

**MATCH OF THE YEAR:
RHODES WINS
NWA TITLE**

**WRESTLER OF THE YEAR:
HARLEY RACE**

**MOST HATED WRESTLER:
GREG VALENTINE**

**MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER:
TED DIBIASE**



**TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR:
IVAN PUTSKI & TITO SANTANA**

Sue
**A LOOK BACK AT CYNARA'S
APARTMENT
WRESTLING
CAREER**

01



OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

- Champion: BOB BACKLUND
1—KEN PATERA
2—BOBBY DUNCUM
3—PAT PATTERSON
4—IVAN PUTSKI
5—SWEDE HANSON
6—HULK HOGAN
7—TED DiBIASE
8—TITO SANTANA
9—LARRY ZBYSZKO
10—HUSSEIN ARAB

AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

- Champion: NICK BOCKWINKEL
1—DINO BRAVO
2—GREG GAGNE
3—VERNE GAGNE
4—MAD DOG VACHON
5—BILLY ROBINSON
6—JERRY LAWLER
7—SUPER DESTROYER II
8—LARRY HENNIG
9—BILL DUNDEE
10—STEVE OLSONOWSKI

MOST POPULAR

- 1—ANDRE THE GIANT
2—DUSTY RHODES
3—IVAN PUTSKI
4—MR. WRESTLING II
5—RICK STEAMBOAT
6—WAHOO Mc DANIEL
7—JACK BRISCO
8—STEVE KEIRN
9—TOMMY RICH
10—KEVIN VON ERICH



IVAN PUTSKI



DINO BRAVO



ANDRE THE GIANT



Giant Baba

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

- Champion: HARLEY RACE
1—DUSTY RHODES
2—JIMMY SNUKA
3—GIANT BABA
4—MR. WRESTLING II
5—TOMMY RICH
6—RIC FLAIR
7—JIM BRUNZELL
8—BRUISER BRODIE
9—KEVIN VON ERICH
10—TERRY FUNK

TAG TEAMS

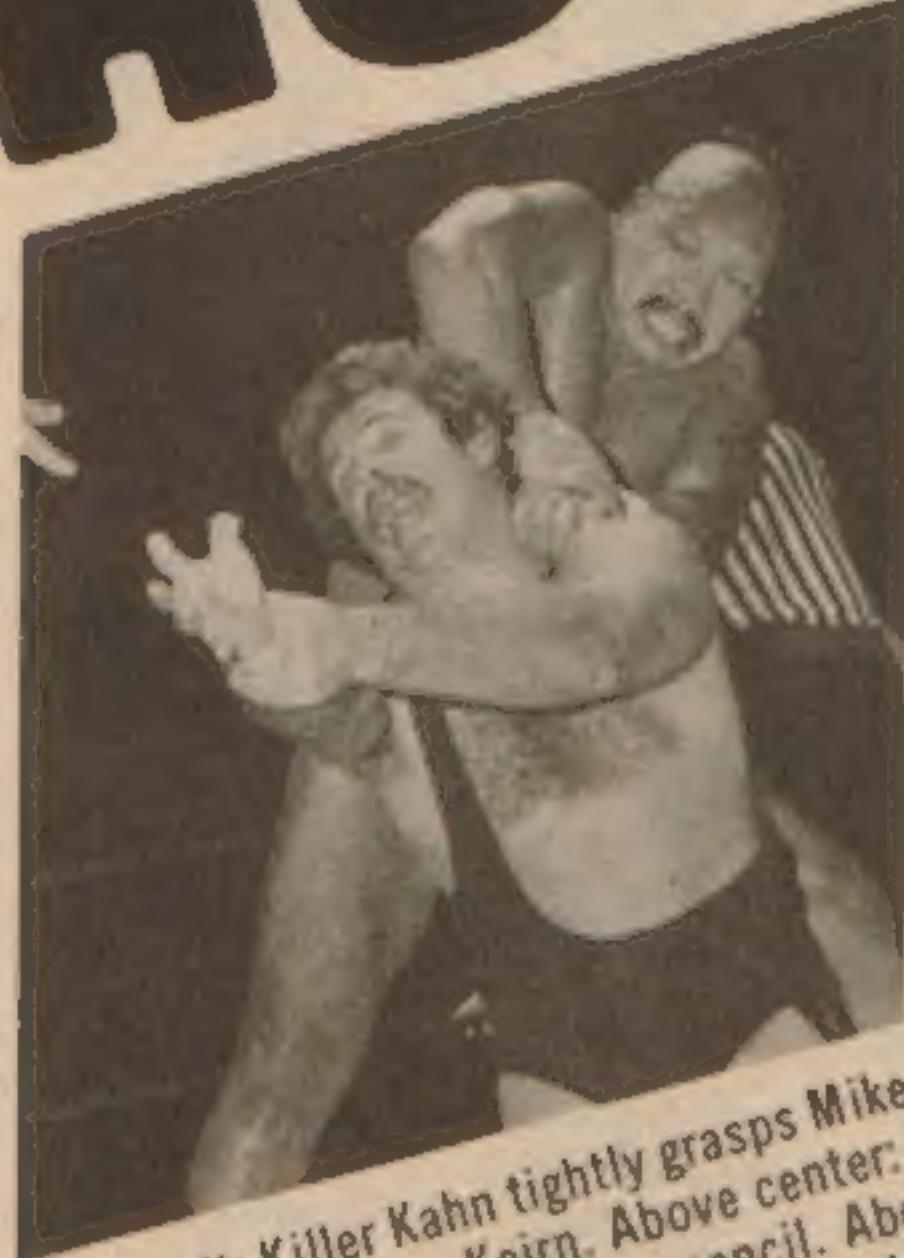
- 1—IVAN PUTSKI & TITO SANTANA
2—RICK STEAMBOAT & JAY YOUNGBLOOD
3—VERNE GAGNE & MAD DOG VACHON
4—BRYAN ST. JOHN & STANLEY LANE
5—PAUL JONES & BARON VON RASCHKE
6—THE SAMOANS
7—BRUISER BRODIE & KERRY VON ERICH
8—AUSTIN IDOL & MASKED SUPERSTAR
9—MR. HITO & MR. SAKURADA
10—THE AVENGER & THE ASSASSIN

MOST HATED

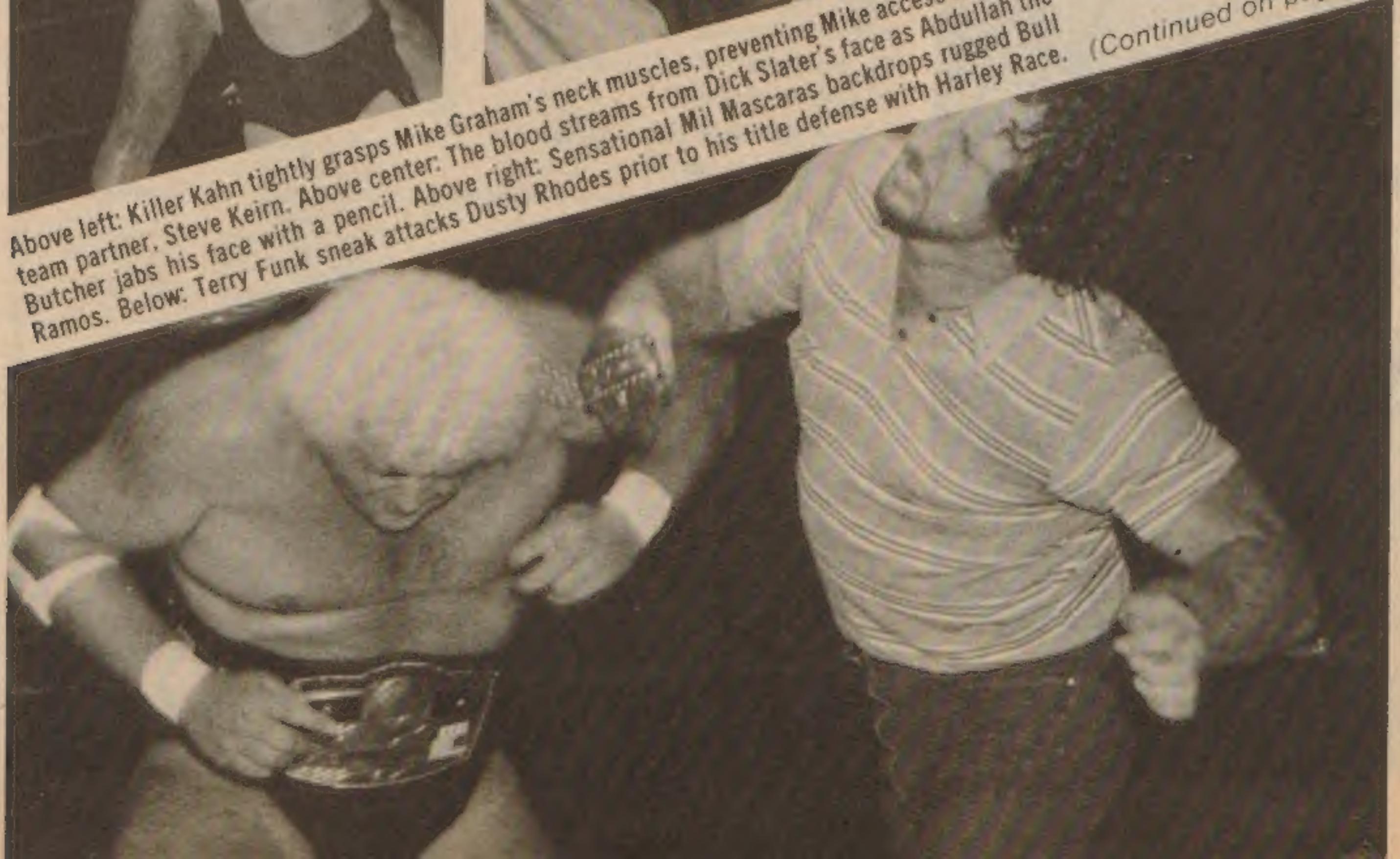
- 1—JIMMY SNUKA
2—TERRY FUNK
3—GREG VALENTINE
4—PAT PATTERSON
5—KEN PATERA
6—KILLER KOX
7—HARLEY RACE
8—ERNIE LADD
9—SUPER DESTROYER II
10—JOHN STUDD

Pictures can capture that moment of frozen brilliance in a manner nothing else can rival. This past year was gorged with historic matches, eternally preserved through the magic of a camera's eye

ACTION 79



Above left: Killer Kahn tightly grasps Mike Graham's neck muscles, preventing Mike access to his tag team partner, Steve Keirn. Above center: The blood streams from Dick Slater's face as Abdullah the Butcher jabs his face with a pencil. Above right: Sensational Mil Mascaras backdrops rugged Bull Ramos. Below: Terry Funk sneak attacks Dusty Rhodes prior to his title defense with Harley Race. (Continued on page 14)

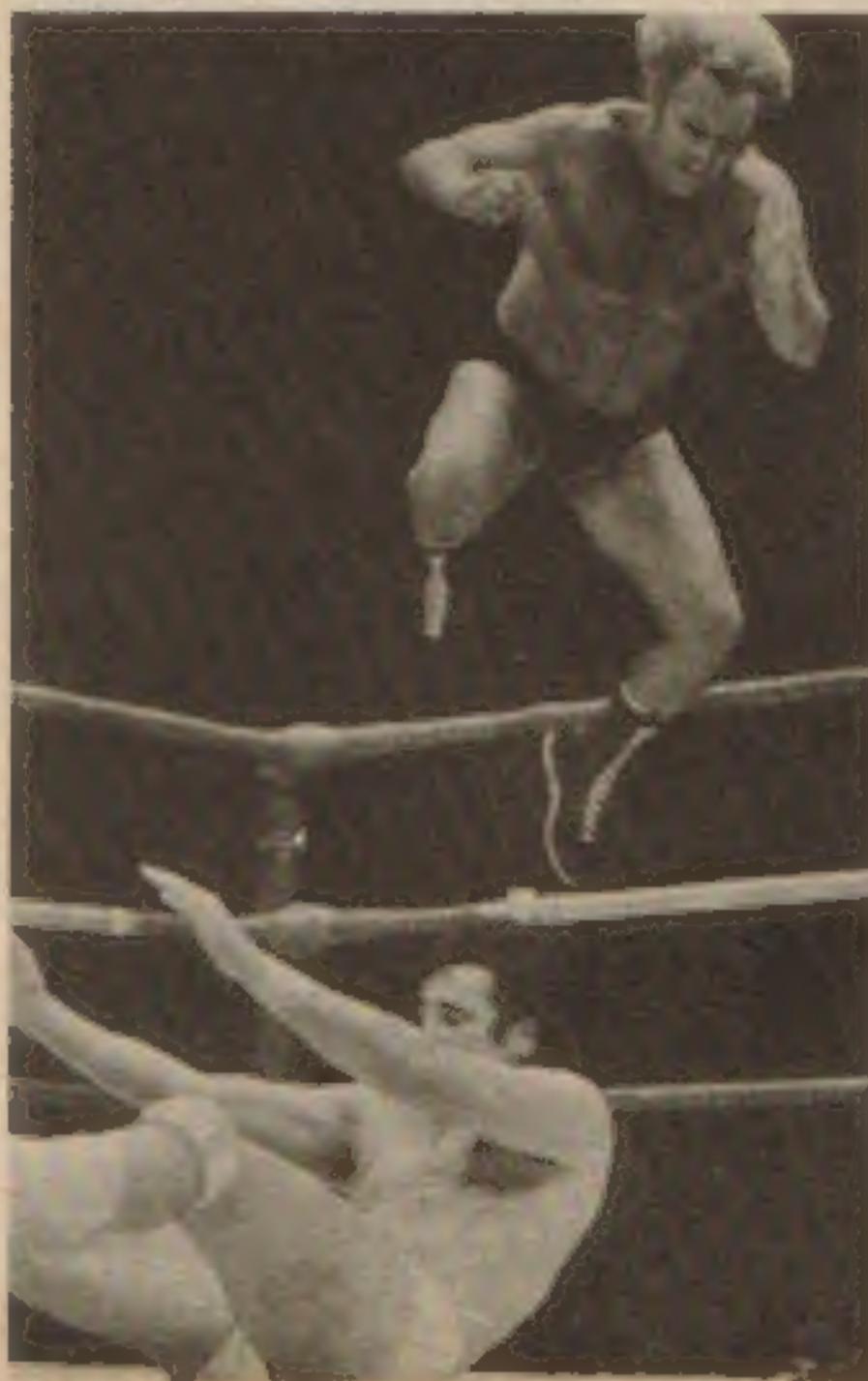


ACTION '79

(Continued from Page 12)

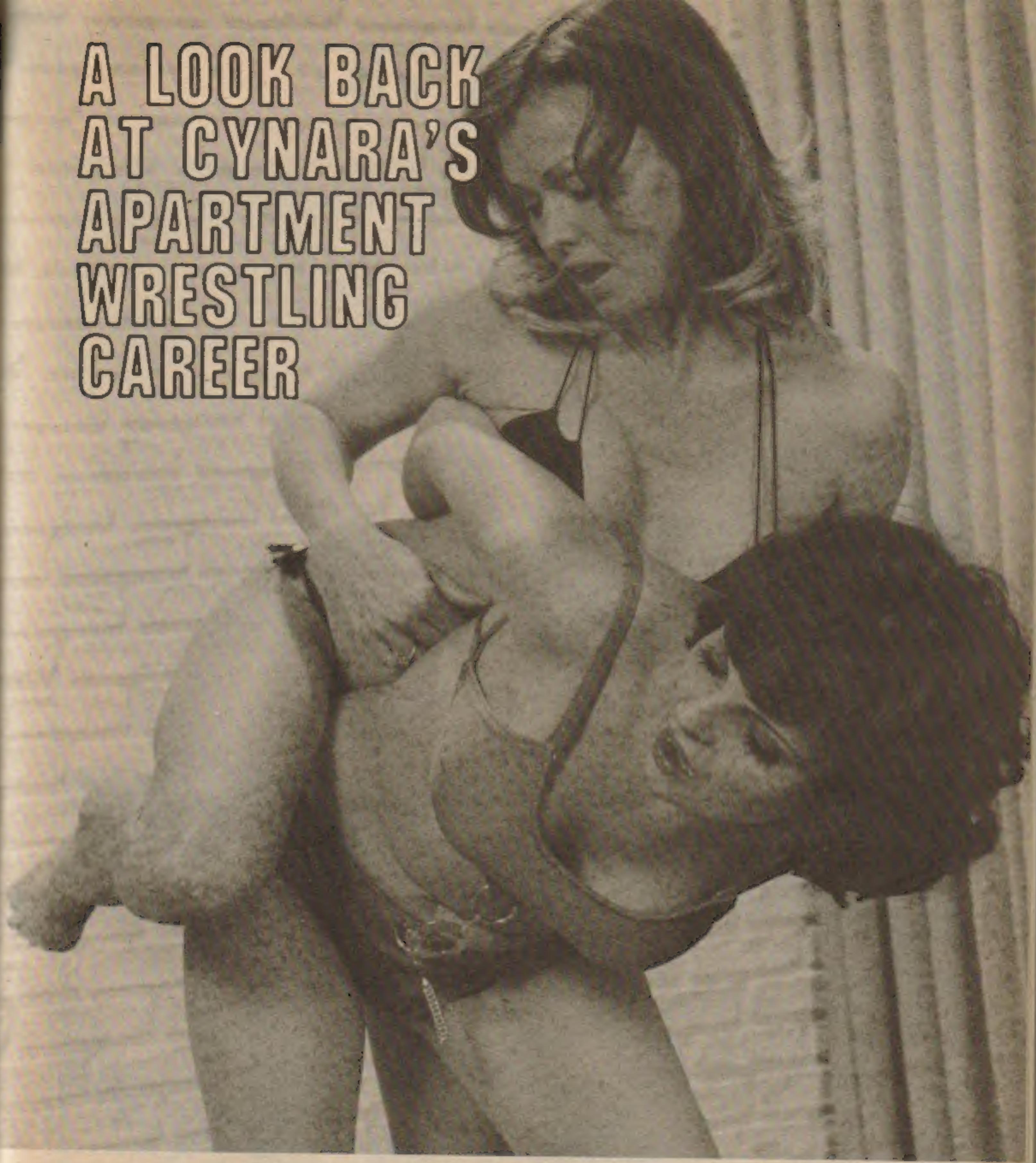


Above: WWF champion Bob Backlund grabs Pat Patterson's foot, preventing his escape from the cage in the conclusion of their classic Madison Square Garden series of bouts. Right: Backlund and AWA champ Nick Bockwinkel wrestled to a draw in Toronto. Below: Greg Gagne averts a Bockwinkel kneedrop at the last second.



(Continued on page 18)

A LOOK BACK AT CYNARA'S APARTMENT WRESTLING CAREER

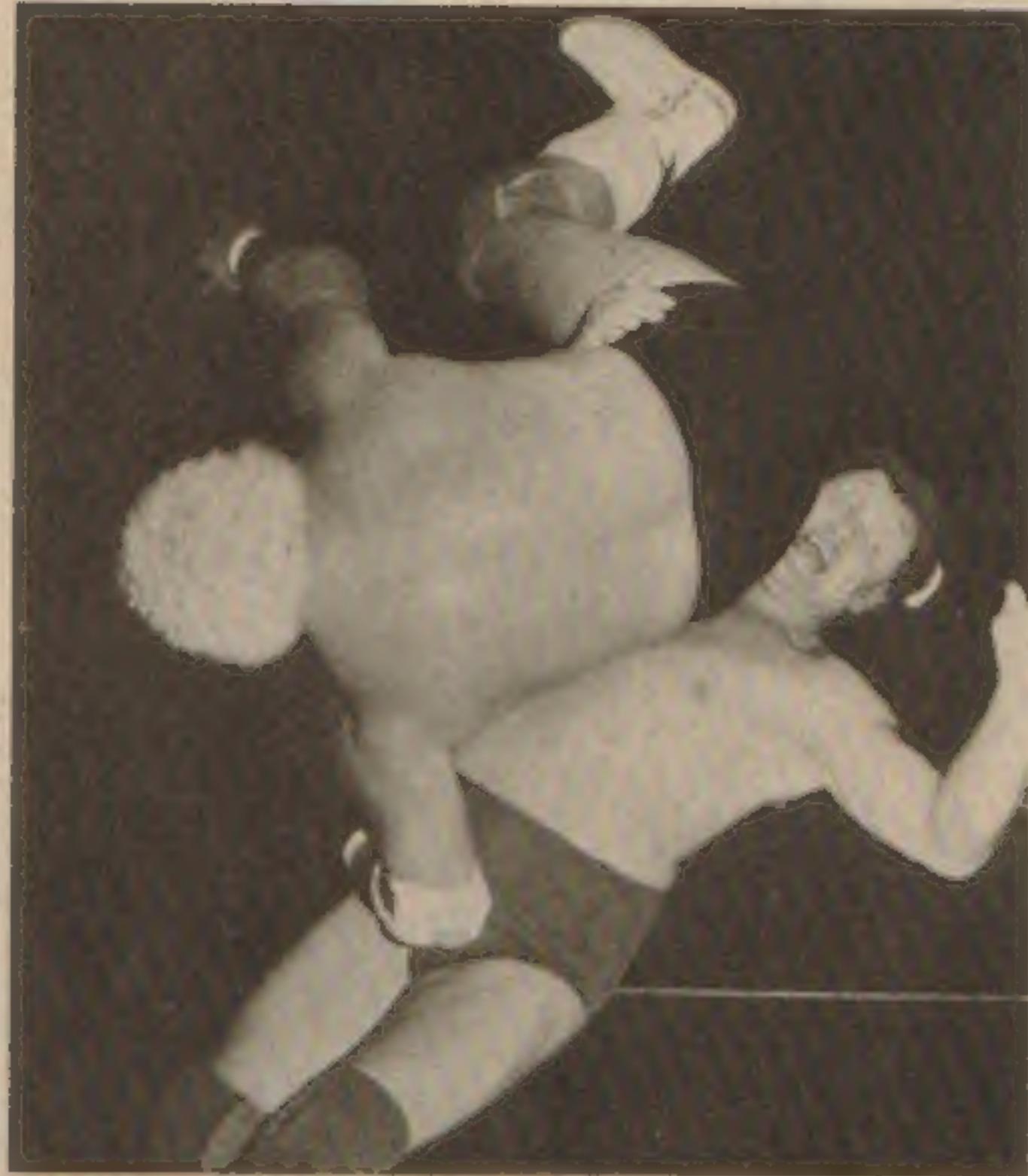


Seldom has such savage beauty been unleashed. When a woman is as lovely and ambitious as Cynara, frenzied matches are sure to come. This is apartment house wrestling at its best . . . and deadliest!

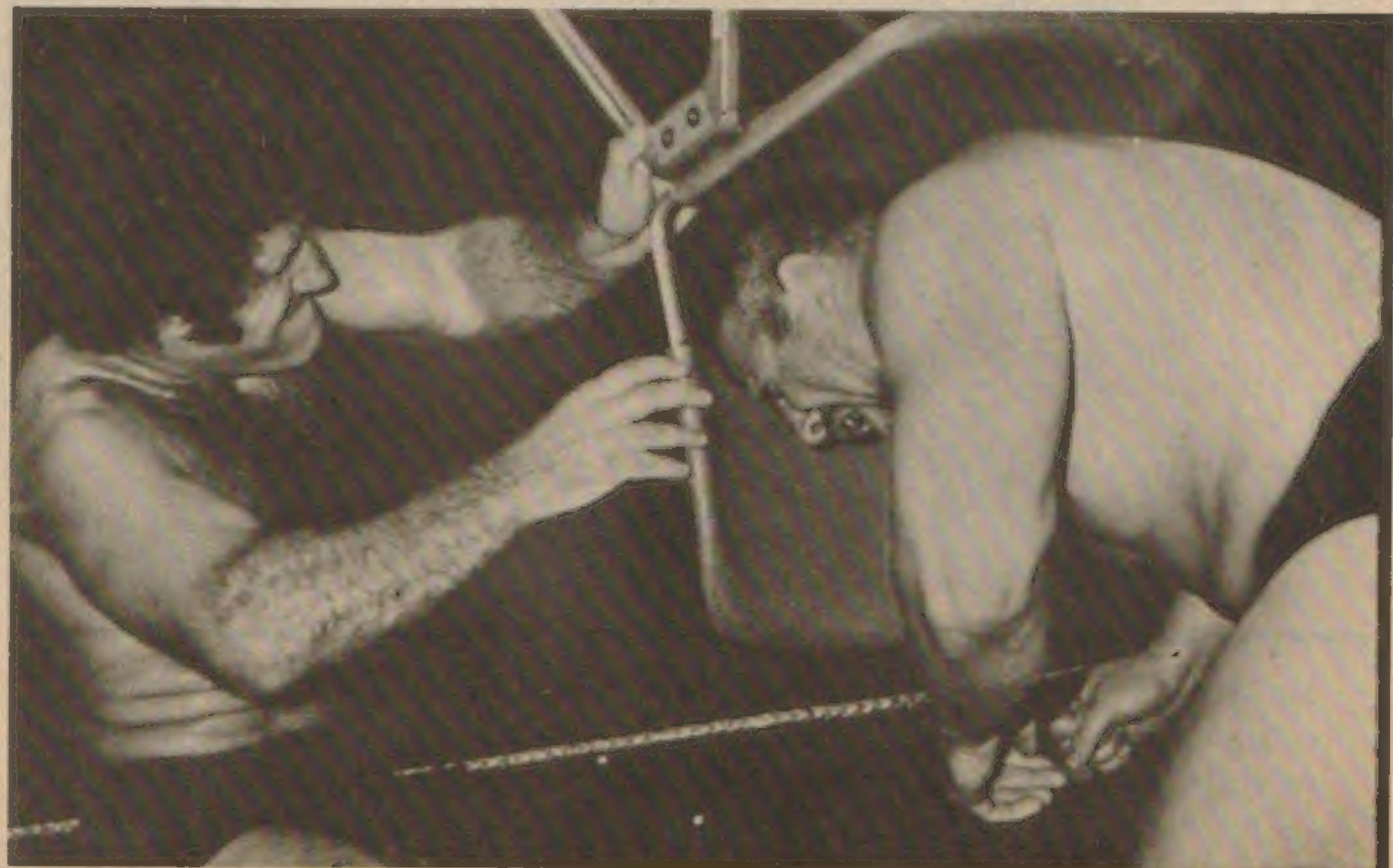
(Continued on page 46)

ACTION '79

(Continued from Page 14)



Above left: Dusty Rhodes won the NWA title from Harley Race in Key West, Florida, but lost it back to Harley five days later. Above right: A bloodied Paul Jones lost control when he wrestled Ric Flair. At the time, Jones was a fan favorite and Flair was a hated rulebreaker. Below: Bruno Sammartino crashes a chair over Nikolai Volkoff's head in their New York grudge match.



NEW ASSOCIATE EDITOR Stu Saks gingerly placed the final tabulations on editor Peter King's cluttered desk. This was Saks' initial "Year End Vote." From the excitement in his voice, it was apparent the tension had already grabbed the young editor.

As it seizes all of us. You, our public, write this section. You, the fans, are the only ones who determine the winners. This is your section. Here are your winners.

selection as "Most Hated." Our editorial staff couldn't agree more.

Can anyone ever forget that memorable night in Tampa when a fiery Dusty Rhodes attained a lifetime's dream and won the NWA title? Few moments in sports have been as soaked in human drama as that incredible championship night.

Rhodes won an unprecedented second consecutive "Most Popular" award. The gent from Texas evokes a shriek of adoration in any arena he graces.

Ivan Putski and Tito Santana demonstrated that two decent men can work together. For their stunning triumph over the Valiant Brothers for the WWF title, Putski and Santana were voted "Tag Team of the Year."

A young masked man with the aerial abilities of a muscular Piper Jet was acclaimed as "Rookie of the Year." His name is Sweet Brown Sugar.

Last Year's winner of the "Rookie of the Year" award, Tommy Rich, captured the

THE YEAR

The votes have been tabulated and the results prepared.
Winners have been contacted,
losers consoled. Here is the section every wrestling fan
eagerly awaits;
the top wrestlers and moments of 1979!

IN REVIEW

For his consistent courage and determination in the face of adversity, three-time NWA champion Harley Race was voted "Wrestler of the Year."

Conversely, fans cited Greg Valentine's barbaric sadism and soulless brutality as the principle reasons for his

Guiding a wrestler to the title is one of achievement. Yet keeping him there is another, even more difficult type of accomplishment. Fans overwhelmingly cited Arnold Skoaland, manager of WWF champion Bob Backlund, as "Manager of the Year."

"Most Improved" vote. And fans decided that Chief Jay Strongbow's remarkable recovery from a broken right leg at the hands of Greg Valentine earned him "Inspirational Wrestler of the Year." □

EVIL MINDS AND evil men breed successful tag teams. Unfortunately, it's a wrestling truism fully supported by fact. Many of the top tag teams have been men whose warped souls integrate into one hideously effective entity.

The Valiant Brothers. The Lumberjacks. The Samoans. The Executioners. Names which sour the memory. Yet names whose success are an unpleasant reality. Good guys simply don't hold together tag teams as well as rulebreakers.

Many so-called experts have speculated on the reasons for this curious condition.

Now, Tito Santana and Ivan Putski shatter tradition. They are a successful, at times brilliant, tag team. They are WWF champions. And the fans have voted them "Tag Team of the Year."

"What? Really? Wow, this is super, I mean, I'm overwhelmed," rambled Santana when he learned the results. "To be given this honor, by the fans no less, is the second-best thing that's ever happened to me."

"Obviously, winning the title with Ivan was the best," said Santana, smiling.

Though accustomed to winning praise for his individual play, Putski finds acclaim as a tag team member uniquely delightful.

"There is nothing like the feeling of accomplishment you receive as part of a winning combination," said Putski. "Two men willing to submerge individual desires for the betterment of the team is, well, a wonderful feeling."

"Too bad bad guys tend to receive so much attention," Putski continued. "I don't know why there are so many bad guy tag teams and why they do so well. Maybe because rule-breakers are basically cowards and need someone to back up their rear, while good guys are confident alone, knowing they have the forces of good behind them."

Illuminating the isolation of Putski and Santana is the nature of the next runners-up, The Valiant Brothers.

(Continued on page 51)

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR:



Ivan Putski & Tito Santana

TAG TEAM

PUTSKI & SANTANA

Valiant Brothers

Jones & Von Raschke

Spoiler & Lewin

Others

VOTES

22,577

17,440

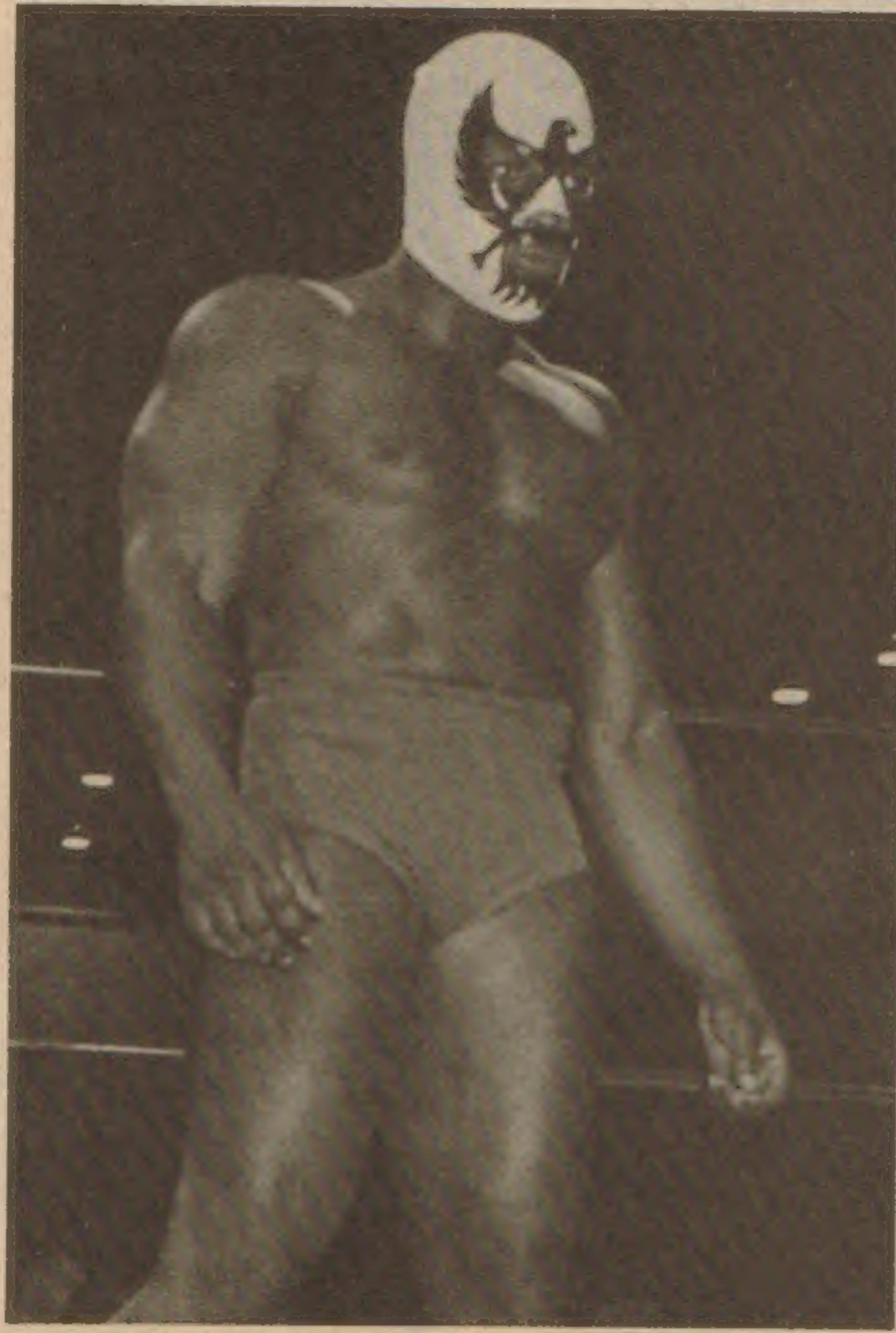
12,388

6,743

8,997



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR:



SWEET BROWN SUGAR

ROOKIE	VOTES
SWEET BROWN SUGAR	19,322
Steve Travis	16,987
Bryan St. John	8,021
Eddie Gilbert	7,567
Others	7,581

EVERY SO OFTEN, a rookie brightens the wrestling sky with unexpected poise and brilliance. A young man by the name of Sweet Brown Sugar has thrilled wrestling fans across Florida with his unique brand of skill and charm. For these reasons, Sugar has been acclaimed 1979's "Rookie of the Year."

"This has to be the biggest thrill of my life," said Sugar. "All my life, I've worked real hard to get to this stage where fans would show their appreciation. I don't know if someone can fully understand the emotion, but when a fan gives you his loyalty, it's very important.



Sweet Brown Sugar poses in Orlando, Florida with one of his many fans.

"From what I can see, fans don't change loyalties, wrestlers do. What I mean is wrestlers will turn around and start breaking rules and misusing loyalty. Understandably, fans will get angry and feel betrayed," said Sugar.

"I want all my fans to know they've placed their faith and love in the proper person."

(Continued on page 52)



MATCH OF THE YEAR:



RHODES WINS NWA TITLE

MATCH	VOTES
RHODES VS. RACE	28,024
Backlund vs. Patterson	26,122
Bockwinkel vs. Backlund	7,872
Mr. Wrestling II vs. Ladd	4,132
Others	9,325

WHO CAN EVER forget **W**ho? Dusty Rhodes against H. Race for the NWA title. Outside, Tampa sweltered under a sizzling August evening. Inside, fans crammed, strained and screamed themselves hoarse from excitement. More than "Match of the Year," the first Rhodes-Race match must go down as one of the greatest in history.

Drama soaked every facet of this titanic struggle. Yet the ending must be the single-most memorable part of the bout.

Rhodes was wavering, struggling to stand. Race scampered atop the rope and prepared to leap upon Rhodes for the final maneuver. As Race neared his supine target, Rhodes lifted his elbow to protect himself. Race drilled into the elbow and toppled over. Pushing aside surprise, Rhodes delivered three straight bionic elbowsmashes for the victory. And the cherished NWA championship.

Two fan comments encapsulate the meaning of this match.

"I cried for days with joy," said Tanya Shelton of Miami.

"In all my 20 years, nothing has thrilled me like this match," said Steven Hayes of Tampa.

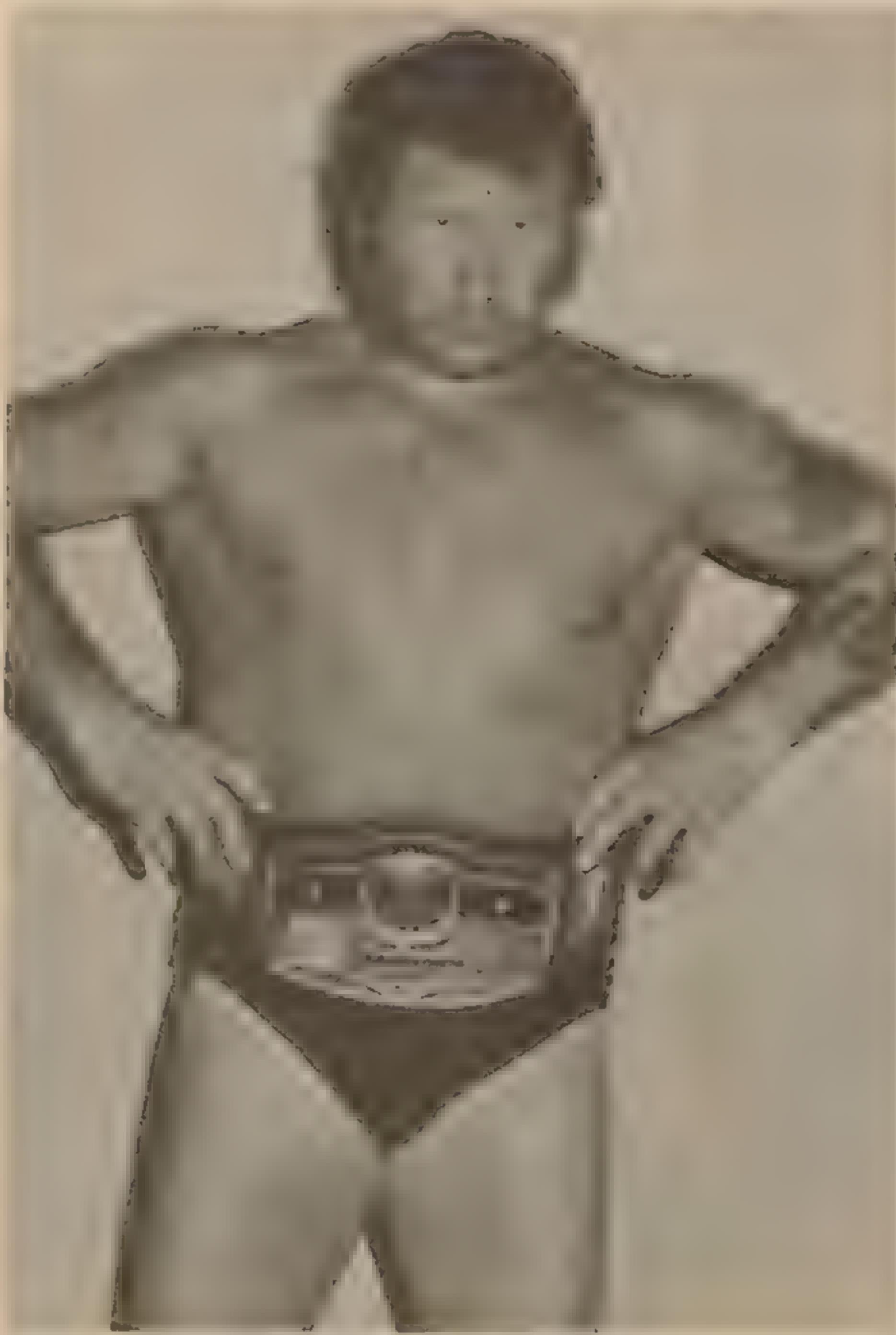
Many thrilling matches clamored for the top spot in 1979. WWF champion Bob Backlund was involved in two of them.

A steel cage match is one of wrestling's more hideous creations. Such a bout compels courage on a level rarely attained by men. Backlund had

(Continued on page 54)



WRESTLER OF THE YEAR:



HARLEY RACE

WRESTLER

HARLEY RACE

Dusty Rhodes

Jimmy Snuka

Bob Backlund

Others

VOTES

21,333

20,425

14,231

14,155

5,769

CERTAIN EVENTS PRODUCE their own legacies. That tumultuous NWA week in August, when Dusty Rhodes won the title from Harley Race, has in just a few short months became part of wrestling legend.

Wrestling will never forget that week. From the votes of our fans, neither will you. By a narrow margin, Race was acclaimed "Wrestler of the Year" over the American Dream, Dusty Rhodes.

"I've been the best wrestler for years," snapped Race. "What makes you think some stupid contest is gonna make me good? I'm good without the contest."

Nothing like a gracious winner. Yet Race *did* win, making examination of his 1979 accomplishments necessary. This past year, Race joined legendary Lou Thesz as the only man to ever win the NWA title three times. Thesz has achieved that six times. Remarkable.

"You better be mean and tough to win the title three times," said Race. "I did it four times. Think what that makes me."

In Japan, Race edged closer to Thesz's amazing mark when he lost and then defeated Baba the Giant within a span of a few days.

"When you're the best, people are shoutin' at you. Refs let them get away with anything because you're the champ, they're the chumps and you're supposed to handle them," Race said. "Hell, I wrestle fair. Tough, but fair. I aim to demonstrate that subtle difference to as many cheats with the guts to take me on."

(Continued on page 56)



MOST HATED WRESTLER:



GREG VALENTINE

MOST HATED GREG VALENTINE

Terry Funk

Ken Patera

Ivan Koloff

Others

VOTES

24,001

19,421

9,768

4,777

9,947

A FAMILIAR GROWL answered the phone on the fifth ring

"Yeah, what you want?"

"Greg Valentine, this is Stu Saks from SPORTS REVIEW ANNUAL."

"Oh, the punk. What you want?"

"Well, uh, we wanted to tell you that the, uh, the fans have voted you, uh . . ."

"I got a steak burnin', punk. Talk."

"Uh, fans voted you 'Most Hated.'"

Barking laughter echoed over the phone, followed by the pounding of a receiver. Only Valentine would be pleased by such a dubious award.

This particular category generates the most comments on the ballots. Those voting for Valentine wrote ". . . a disgusting vermin" and "let someone break his leg" to "he makes me sick." These remarks typified fan reaction.

Valentine's abuses center around his sadistic, almost non-human approach to wrestling. Notably, Chief Jay Strongbow sustained a broken right leg and several preliminary wrestlers suffered severe injuries at Valentine's legs.

Yes, legs, not hands. His misuse of the figure-four leglock, an honorable maneuver in the hands of decent men, has provoked calls for his banishment. Maybe next year.

If Valentine is a blood-thirsty sadist, runner-up Terry Funk is a certifiable maniac. Fiercely loyal to both family and Texas, Funk's principles evaporate once he enters the ring. (*Continued on page 58*)



MOST POPULAR WRESTLER:



DUSTY RHODES

MOST POPULAR DUSTY RHODES

	VOTES
Andre the Giant	22,145
Ivan Putski	19,781
Mr. Wrestling II	10,472
Others	8,534
	10,275

FOR YEARS, Dusty Rhodes suffered under the stigmatic label of "most popular wrestler *never* to win a major title." That dubious acclaim pained Rhodes.

"In a way, I'm appreciative of fans lovin' me and all. Hell, no one loves his fans more than me," said Dusty. "But I wanted both. I wanted to be the most popular wrestler who was champion to boot. Thank heavens I finally did it. The agony was about to choke me up."

This past August in Tampa, Rhodes defeated Harley Race for the NWA title. Because of that and other factors, Rhodes narrowly edged Andre the Giant for the prestigious "Most Popular Wrestler of the Year."

"Winnin' this award for the second straight year makes me very, very happy," said Rhodes. "Winnin' a title is something you do yourself, two guys diggin' and fightin' for a title. That's a very personal crusade which no one can really help you with, despite fans screaming and urgin' you on."

"But this award is something special to me. When a wrestler wins this, he knows the fans out there love him. After all, without the fans, where are any of us?" Rhodes said.

Finishing second in the fans' hearts was Andre the Giant. The margin, however, was so slight as to make any distinction between first and second irrelevant.

"Awards and trophies are nice," said Andre. "But you cannot measure affection by votes. Whether I win this category or not doesn't matter. What counts are all my fans

(Continued on page 62)

MOST IMPROVED MUST be the toughest category for any fan to determine.

Exactly what constitutes improvement? Must a man win a title to show improvement? Is

it measured by the quality of his play? The quality *and* quantity of opponents?

Tommy Rich exemplifies many of these characteristics. Last year's "Rookie of the Year" has made another important step toward superstardom when fans voted him this season's "Most Improved Wrestler."

"You're kidding me," Rich said, stunned. "I mean, really? I won most improved? I, I can't believe it."

This time last year, Rich was a green rookie still awed by professional wrestling.

"Yeah, I was kinda wet behind the ears," he said. "Fortunately, I had friends like Tim Woods and Mr. Wrestling II who guided me and supported me. They made sure I got over the bumps a rookie goes through if he expects to amount to anything."

Rich amounted to a lot more than just "anything." Recently, the young blond startled the rulebreaker world with a triumph over Killer Karl Kox for the Georgia heavyweight championship.

"That, wow, that night was amazing," Rich recalled. "Like any dream, you always wonder exactly what it will be like to become champion. No matter how much you imagine the feeling, it's never quite like reality."

"For days, I was in a happy fog. Every few minutes, at least it seemed every few minutes, I'd take the belt out and look it over," Rich said, grinning. "This has been one incredible year. Winning this award from

(Continued on page 63)

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER:



TOMMY RICH

MOST IMPROVED

	VOTES
TOMMY RICH	17,529
Eddy Mansfield	12,431
Kevin Von Erich	9,222
Ted DiBiase	9,147
Others	19,122



INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER:



CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW

INSPIRATIONAL
CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW
Ric Flair
Mr. Wrestling II
Dusty Rhodes
Others

VOTES
30,213
11,212
9,111
7,510
6,028

CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW is not a man who likes to burden others with his problems. "Everybody has problems," he says. "Why inflict yours on somebody else."

Chief Jay Strongbow substitutes that statement for saying, "thank you, but I don't want anybody's pity."

Strongbow never announced the fact that his career very nearly did not survive the decade. In the horrifying incident in which Greg Valentine broke his leg, Strongbow also suffered severe cartilage and ligament damage. It was not just recommended that he quit wrestling, but he was ordered to quit wrestling by one of the most renown orthopedic specialists in the nation. Strongbow never considered following that order.

"Doc, don't tell me I have to quit," he said. "Just tell me the best way to rehabilitate myself. I'm coming back."

Not a single fan who voted Chief Jay Strongbow the award of "Inspirational Wrestler of the Year" knew just how courageous the Chief really is. The true medical facts are just now being revealed.

Over the next few months Strongbow underwent an intensive rehabilitation program with the use of Nautilus weights. And when he wasn't working out, he would sit in the stands and watch Valentine wrestle. He remained silent, but always within Valentine's sights. Valentine learned to fear his presence. And by the time Strongbow made his remarkable return, Greg was petrified

(Continued on page 64)



LIKE ALEXANDER THE GREAT, Napoleon, and Ulysses S. Grant, Arnold Skoaland has had to endure the skeptics who refused to believe in the ultimate success of

his plans.

"First time I ever saw Bob Backlund, I knew he'd be champ," said Skoaland, 1979's Manager of the Year. "And as soon as I said that, everyone

scoffed and said he was too young and Superstar Graham would eat him for dinner. I hate to say I told you so, but, well, I told you so."

That sixth sense of determining what rests inside a man's soul is what separates a good manager from a great one. Skoaland says he can look into a man's eyes, see his soul and know if the wrestler has what it takes.

"First time I met Bruno [Sammartino], I could tell he would be a star," said Skoaland. "Bruno had a fire that adversity could never quell. And Backlund has the same drive.

"Few years ago, this young man came up to me after one of the matches at the Garden and asked if I'd handle his career. Now this kid was talented, make no mistake about that," Arnold said. "But he would never be champion. And, I'm genuinely sorry to say, I was correct. He's a good wrestler, but not of championship caliber. Either you have the burning fires, determination, courage, and patience, or you don't."

Skoaland sees his job as a combination of wrestling adviser, financial consultant, and personal friend.

"When all the reporters and fans are gone, a wrestler's manager is the one person he turns to for help," said Skoaland. "I'll never turn Bob away. He's my friend."

A different type of manager placed second in the balloting. Whereas Skoaland is calm and even-tempered, Captain Lou Albano is volatile and unpredictable. Yet Albano insists he

(Continued on page 65)

MANAGER OF THE YEAR:



ARNOLD SKOALAND

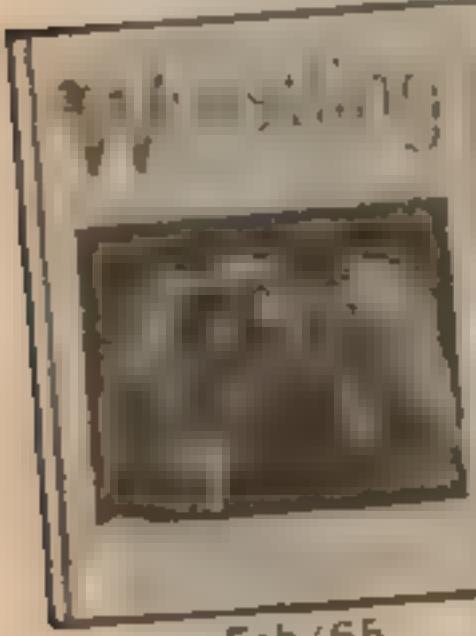
MANAGER	VOTES
ARNOLD SKOALAND	27,765
Lou Albano	12,554
Buddy Rogers	10,587
Sir Oliver Humperdink	7,290
Others	10,284



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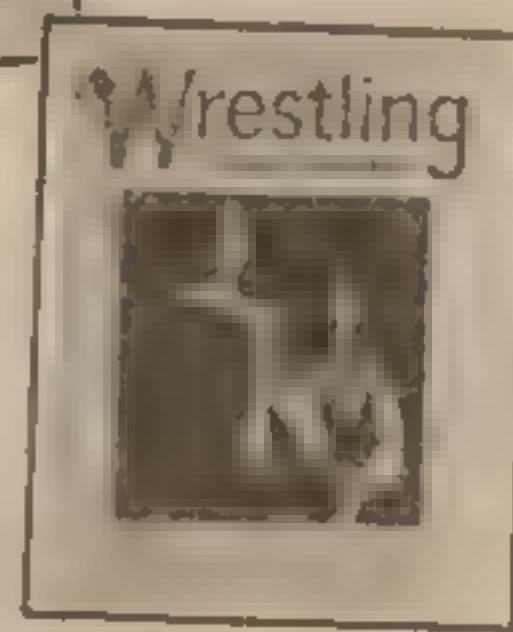


Feb/65
PEPPER GOMEZ

Pinups are listed under each issue.

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March/65
ARGENTINA APOLLO

CYNARA

(Continued from Page 17)



Perhaps the most magnificent series of apartment wrestling battles were between Cynara and Salome (above and below). These two splendid beauties, their bodies hard and taut with a majesty unequalled in any two other combatants. A popular young poet once compared their cataclysmic confrontations as "the gods allowing us to glimpse the power of Olympus."



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Few people will ever forget the bout in which a furious brawler from Atlanta, Scarlett, traveled to New York to challenge Cynara. As the photos show, Scarlett had a few good moments (above). For most of the match, though, Scarlett suffered the agonies of any woman who faced Cynara (top and below).



(Continued on page 48)

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DR. A. S. MAKES HIS PATIENTS SEVERAL INCHES TALLER

By Dr. A. S. (Dr. A. S. is a registered medical doctor in Florida. He has been practicing medicine for over 20 years.)

Dr. R. L. Johnson, 20 yr. Research Fellow between 1948-1968 at the National Institutes of Health, Washington, D.C., found that:

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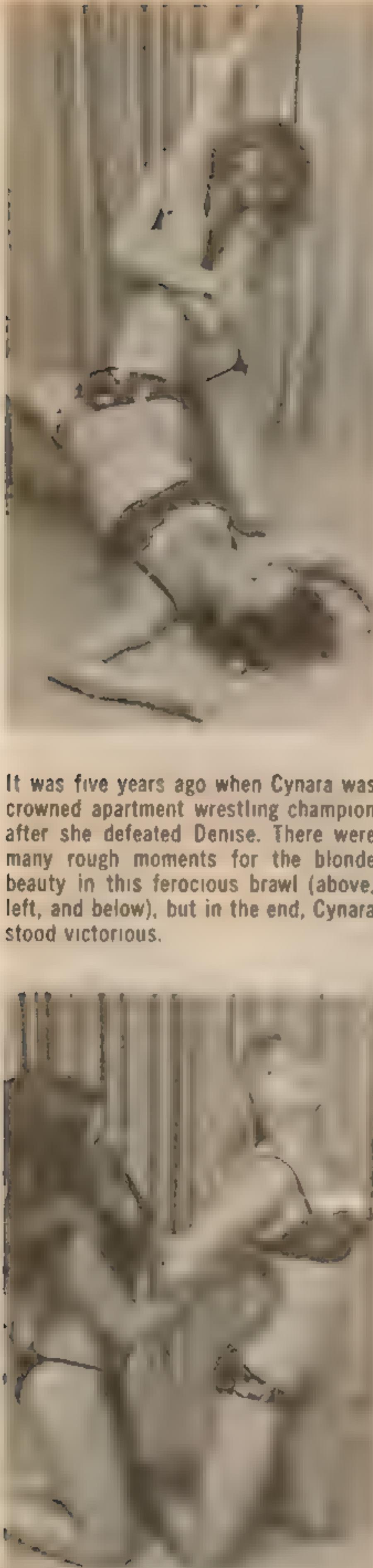
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CYNARA

(Continued from Page 46)





It was five years ago when Cynara was crowned apartment wrestling champion after she defeated Denise. There were many rough moments for the blonde beauty in this ferocious brawl (above, left, and below), but in the end, Cynara stood victorious.

(Continued on page 50)

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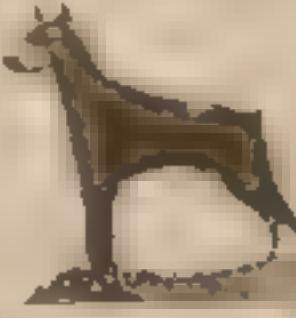
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CYNARA

(Continued from Page 48)



No glimpse at the career of Cynara could be complete without mention of her wild and savage brawls with the Amazon Jenny. The tawny blonde challenger would use any weapon (above), glory in cruelty (below left) and refuse to surrender no matter how great the agony (below right).



TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 29)



2nd Place— THE VALIANT BROTHERS

"Fans voted us second?" sneered Jerry Valiant. "Since when do wrestling fans read and write? I thought all they could do was scream out their stupid words for their stupid favorites like Backlund or Sammartino."

Next finisher was Paul Jones and Baron Von Raschke.

"Fans! Where are they when I need them?" asked Jones. "Now they want to vote for me. Well, tell them what they can do with their ballots, buster."

"I don't recognize wrestling fans," said Von Raschke. "As far as I'm concerned, we'd be better off barring them from arenas."

And fourth was Spoiler and Mark Lewin.

"Votes, ballots, awards, what's it all mean?" shouted Lewin. "Only thing of consequence is who wins the match. Me and Spoiler are unbeaten, so that's the only contest we care about. Fans voting in. What a joke."



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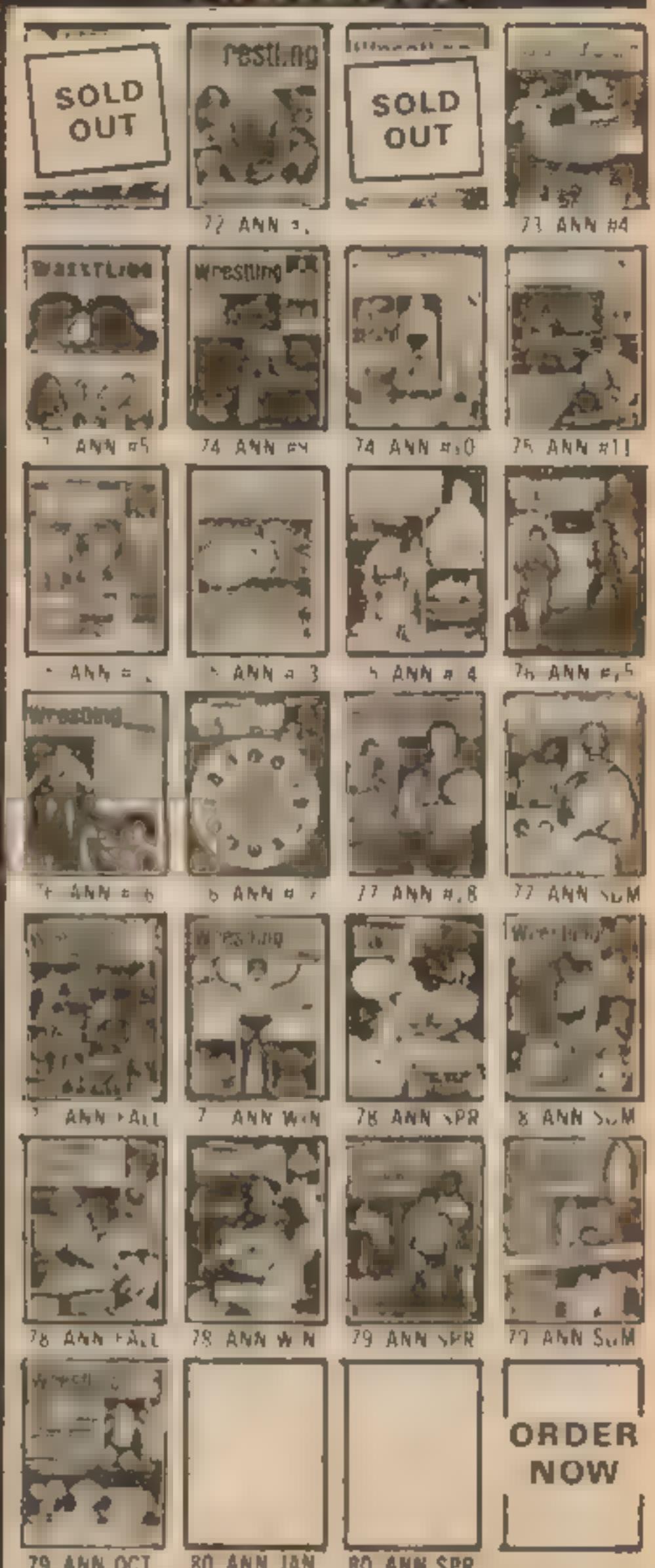


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ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 31)



2nd Place—STEVE TRAVIS



3rd Place—BRYAN ST. JOHN

Sugar said, his voice wavering. "I would never, ever turn my back on the fans. Ever."

Sugar combines aerial gymnastics with muscular maneuvers to produce a formidable package.

"It's no secret that Mil Mascaras is my idol," said Sugar. "As far as I'm concerned, Mascaras is the greatest. Flying dropkicks must be the most difficult maneuver to use. You

need agility and strength or else the entire maneuver collapses. Many factors go into a successful maneuver. If one is messed up, everything falls apart. So concentration is also needed."

Another outstanding wrestler placed a close second to Sugar in the balloting. Steve Travis, who confronts rulebreakers across the nation, was overwhelmed.

"Could you believe that? I can't," Travis babbled. "Think of it, fans writing my name on their ballots and mailing them in. Makes everything worthwhile, know what I mean?"

A relative newcomer to both wrestling and the way of civilization finished third. Bryan St. John is proud of his growing reputation as a "punk."

"I don't think of myself as a punk, but I know what the idiots mean when they call me that," snapped St. John. "Means they're jealous of my looks and talent. Means they can't stand the thought of me whipping and demolishing all the fool scientific wrestlers across Florida."

"As for this fan stuff, I could care less. I know who my real fans are and they don't waste their time voting, that's for sure," said St. John.

In fourth place was a talented wrestler with a family tradition to uphold, Eddie Gilbert.

"It isn't easy having a famous father," Gilbert said. "But Dad taught me a great deal about wrestling and life. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today." □

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MATCH OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 33)



2nd Place—PAT PATTERSON VS. BOB BACKLUND

to dig deep, but he found the courage. A pity his foe was Pat Patterson, a man who knows little about courage except that which he observes in others.

In this steel cage match at Madison Square Garden, the blood flowed like wine at a wedding. When the veined bottles had dried up, Backlund still held the WWF title. Somehow, he'd survived the fiendish assault.

Before a capacity crowd in Toronto, Backlund took on AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel. Perhaps Bockwinkel was Backlund's toughest opponent. The AWA champ's shrewd strategy can unravel the best laid plans of scientific wrestlers. This match pitted brains against brains, brawn

against brawn.

If Bockwinkel thought he could cheat his way to victory, Backlund showed him the error of his ways. Too often, matches are described as textbook bouts. Too often, such descriptions are inaccurate. Not this time. The Backlund-Bockwinkel bout in Toronto was a classic battle.

In fourth place was Good vs. Evil. Surely no two wrestlers so embody those diametrically opposed philosophies as Mr. Wrestling II and Ernie Ladd.

II, a gentle masked man, shirks no challenge. When given the opportunity to meet Ladd, II eagerly accepted. The results of that decision was a match filled with ferocity and brilliance. Fans voted this fourth place. □



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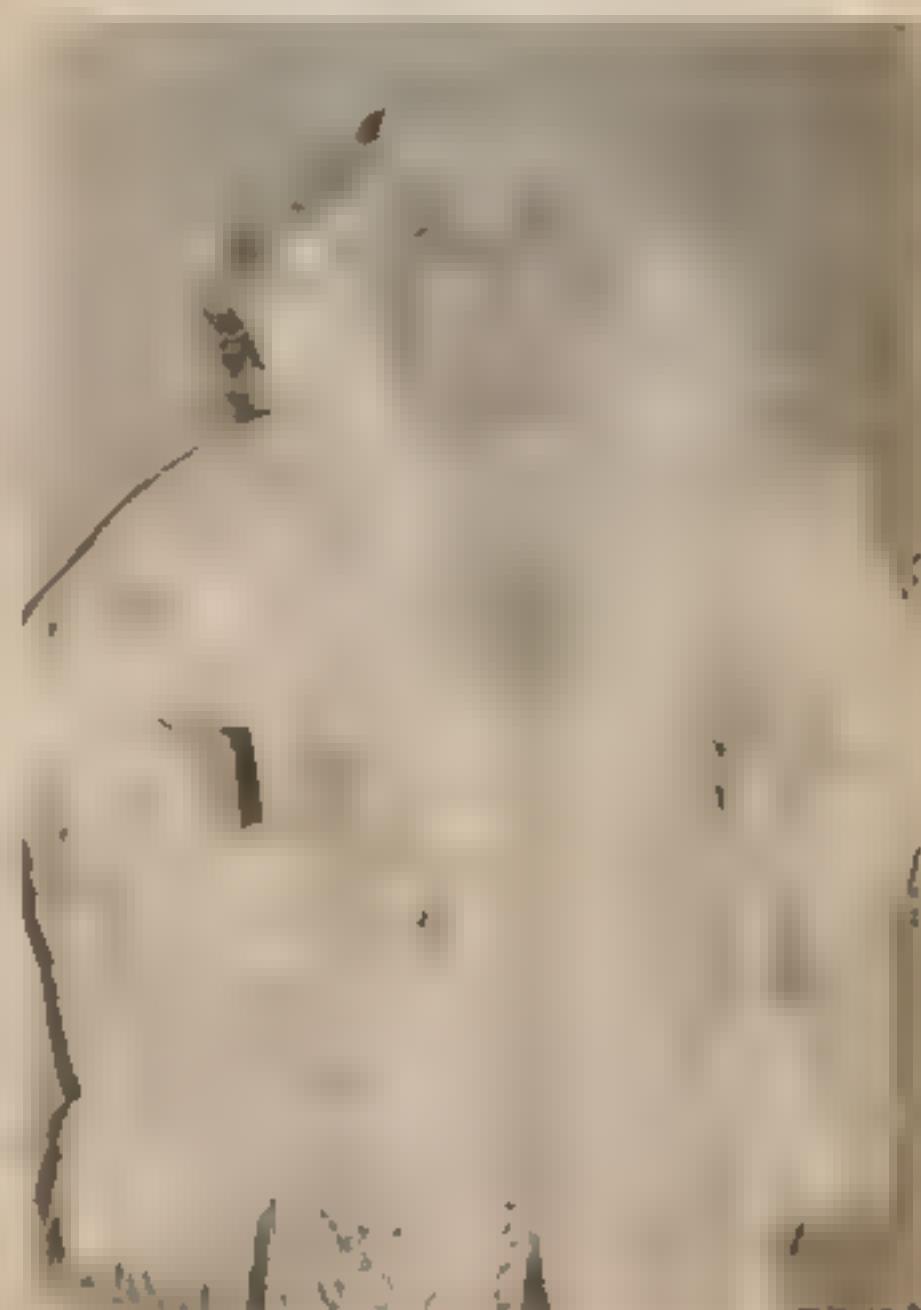
WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 35)

Both Race and Rhodes resent their connection, a link both are eager to destroy.

"Rhodes got lucky once. I showed his win was luck by the way I annihilated him the third time we met," said Race. "Look how many times we wrestle, see how many times I won and how often he won? Get the message?"

"I make no excuses, no claims, no threats, no nothin' except to say that the Dream will be back. He will be back in



2nd Place—DUSTY RHODES

force in 1980 and he will be the NWA champion for years and years," said Rhodes. "Fans are tired of hearin' about Race. wrestlers are tired. writers hate to type his name, and I'm sick of his lousy luck."

"Put 1980 down as the year Harley Race leaves wrestling," said Rhodes.

Fans surprised everyone with their third-place selection of Jimmy Snuka. Tough Snuka didn't finish as close to Rhodes



3rd Place—JIMMY SNUKA

and Race as the margin separating the top two, but he did beat out a number of top-notch grapplers.

In specific terms, Snuka's most notable achievement was to capture the U.S. Heavyweight title vacated by Ric Flair. Shortly after winning the title, Snuka successfully defended the belt against former champ Flair in a savage bout.

But Snuka's most lasting "accomplishment" was turning rulebreaker and joining forces with Buddy Rogers.

"I could care less what fans voted," said Snuka. "I don't listen to morons."

WWF champion Bob Backlund finished a strong fourth. As always, his comments reflected grace and humility.

"A fan's love is worth more to me than a million title belts," said Backlund. □

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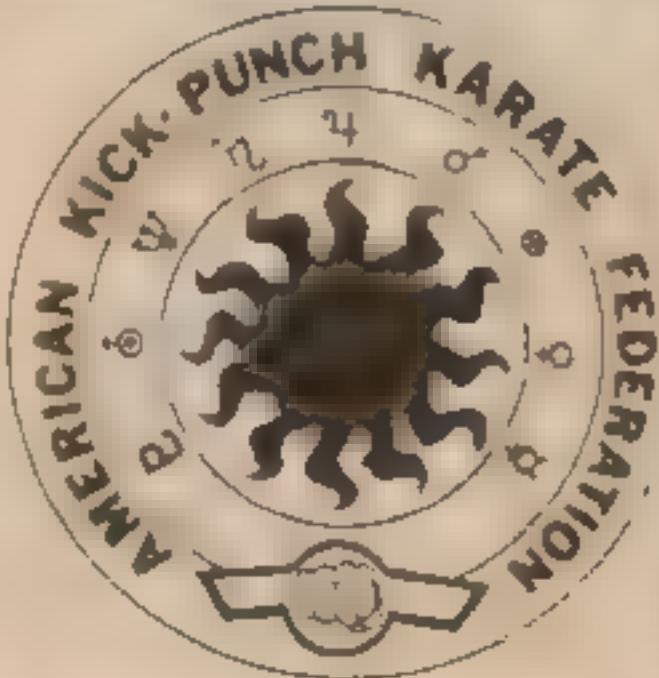
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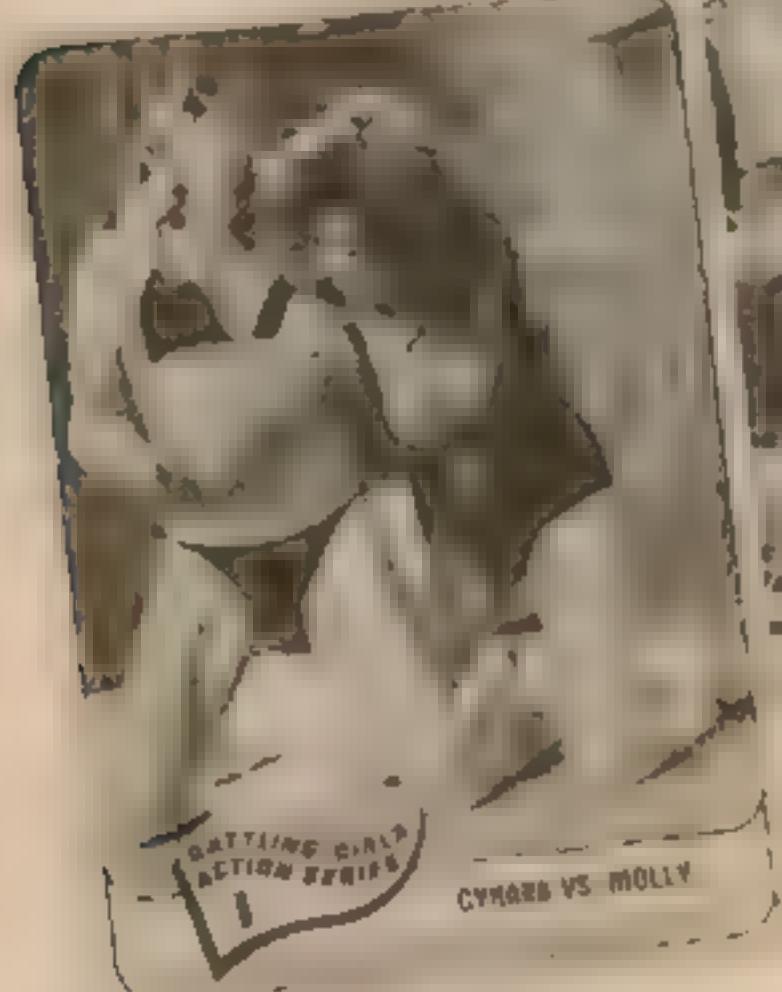


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MOST HATED WRESTLER

(Continued from Page 37)

Undoubtedly, the persuasive factor in Funk's many votes was his mindless attack on Dusty Rhodes prior to the champion's second rematch against Harley Race. Repeatedly, Funk has explained away that attack. Yet each explanation loses credibility in the face of Funk's continuing treachery. In short, Terry Funk has no scruples. Fans all over the nation recognized that, in their votes and their unrelenting hostility to Funk in the arena.

Former Mid-Atlantic champion Ken Patera finished third in fan hatred. Few rule-breakers are as universally despised as Patera. Over the years, he has consistently finished among the leaders in the "Rulebreaker of the Year" voting. His reaction?

"Third? Not surprising. Since about half of one percent of wrestling fans can write, you don't expect the intelligent ones to write in. And my fans are the intelligent ones," said Patera.

Finishing a close fourth is that paragon of Soviet treachery, Ivan Koloff. When reached by phone and informed of his finish, Koloff responded with typical nasty disconcern.

"Ah, Americans, Americans. You are all so weak-kneed and indecisive, I am surprised any of you would decide to place a stamp on the envelope. Where I finish in your foolish little polls is unimportant," Koloff said. "All that matters is where I finish in the ring. In there, I am always first." □

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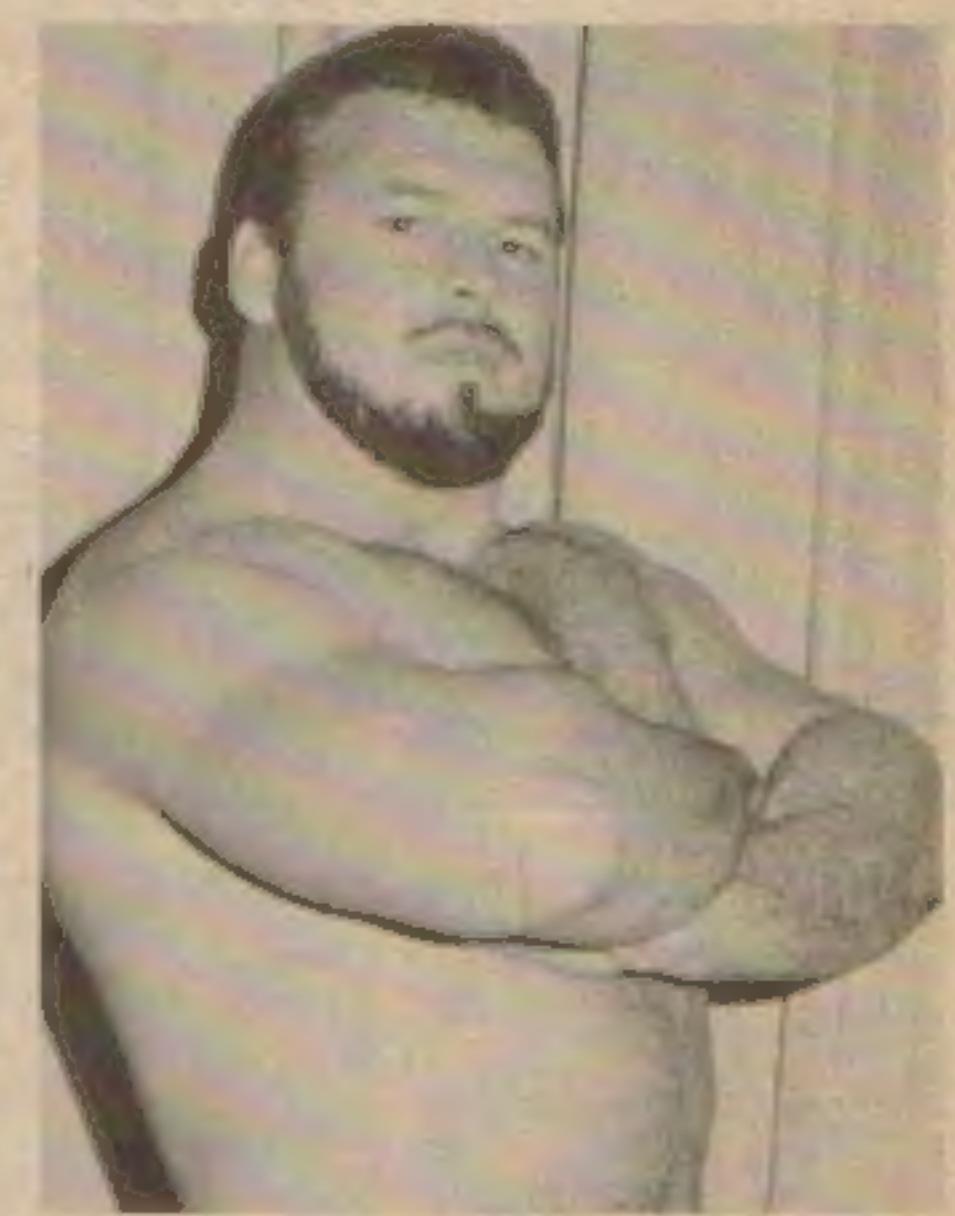
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MOST POPULAR WRESTLER

(Continued from Page 39)



2nd Place—ANDRE THE GIANT



3rd Place—IVAN PUTSKI



4th Place—MR. WRESTLING II

who took the time to mark me down as most popular. I do not like to break a measure of affection down to such cold-hearted details as finishing first and second.

"All I know is my fans think I am number one. That is all that matters. Oh, and I want to congratulate my friend Dusty Rhodes. If I do not win, I want Dusty to win," said Andre, always gracious.

Polish Power finished a strong third. As usual, Ivan

Putski's magnetic personality galvanizes fans around voting time.

"My fans always come out and vote for me," said Putski. "I never have to ask them to vote. They always seem to know when the time is ripe for their version of Polish Power to crash through the mail."

"To me, most popular wrestler is the most important category. If I don't have my fans screaming my name, it doesn't seem important whether I win or lose," Putski continued. "What makes my whole night is the fans yelling for me. Ah, nothing like a wrestling fan, is there?"

The Southwest bombarded the ballots with support for their favorite, Mr. Wrestling II.

"That many people voted for me?" II exclaimed happily. "That makes me feel good. To think so many fans sat down and mailed in a ballot, just because they like and respect my wrestling. That is ample enough reward." □

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER

(Continued from Page 41)

the fans is awfully sweet icing on the cake."

Another blond, Eddy Mansfield, finished second to Rich. About all Mansfield and Rich have in common, however, is the color of their hair.

"What a disgrace finishing second to a bum like Rich," snarled Mansfield. "How could that happen? You sure all the votes were counted? I heard writers can't count too well. Well, I can't really care about votes like this. Anyone can see I'm better than Rich."

"I'm better looking, for starters. I got a better body. I got more talent and I'm smarter. Maybe Rich should win most improved. He is a bum who had no where to go but up. Me, I'm already great. How can you improve on greatness?"

Third and fourth place finishers were separated by the thinnest of margins. Both Kevin Von Erich and Ted DiBiase expressed appreciation for their fan support and vowed even greater improvement in 1980.

"Anytime a fan takes the time to fill out a ballot and mail that ballot in, you have to feel real appreciative," said Von Erich. "I like to think I've improved over the past year. If you don't improve, something is very wrong."

This most improved department is still for us young guys, said DiBiase. "To be honest, I'd much rather finish among the leaders in Wrestler of the Year or Most Popular. I want to thank my fans for voting for me and I promise them a title in 1980. That's the best way I know to say thanks." □

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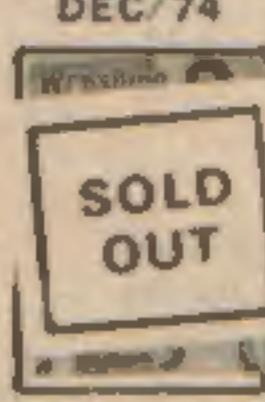
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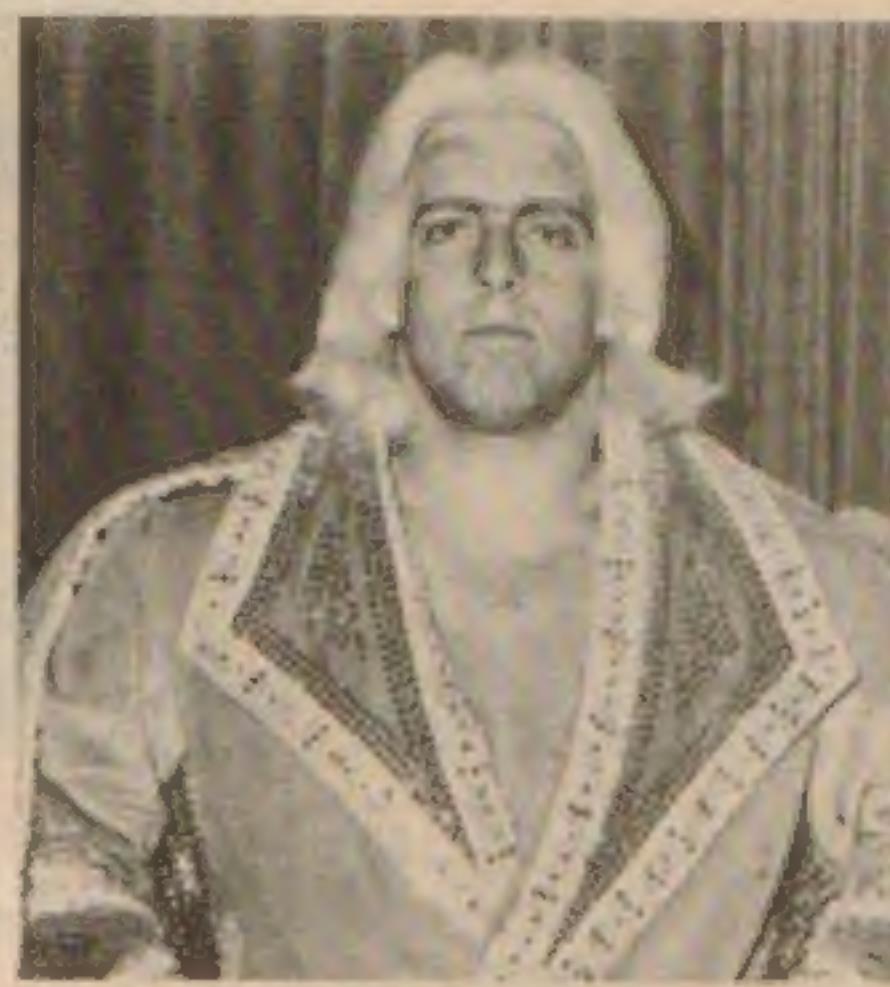
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INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER

(Continued from Page 43)



2nd Place—RIC FLAIR

of the man. Chief Jay Strongbow got his revenge, and in inspirational fashion.

Ric Flair's courage was of a different nature. After establishing himself as an enemy of scientific wrestling and alienating himself to fans across the country, Flair changed his ways. Taking such a step, he risked never having a friend in the sport. The rule-breakers naturally stopped associating with him, and the scientific wrestlers were weary of being duped. It was the fans that immediately threw their hearts and trust out to Flair.



3rd Place—MR. WRESTLING II

And it is the fans that award him second place in this year's voting.

Following a close third is Mr. Wrestling II. Despite wrestling out of the Georgia area, his home base, II always found time to come back to the area to make sure the disease of Bobby Heenan's army does not overcome the state. And when Heenan discovered a technicality that could keep II from regaining a license to wrestle in Georgia, II went into seclusion until he found a way to get back. Once he did, a frustrated Bobby Heenan went on his way.

Dusty Rhodes' greatest year ever could also be considered his worst. Dusty achieved his life-long goal by defeating Harley Race and winning the NWA title. But in the well-publicized Rematch II, Rhodes' right arm was broken in a senselessly brutal attack by Terry Funk. Rhodes could have chosen not to wrestle; Race gave him the option. But he did not want to disappoint the fans. He wrestled. He lost the title. His dream was shattered. The fans who honor him with fourth place this year, will not forget. □



4th Place—DUSTY RHODES

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 45)

gives his all for the men he manages.

"I give a thousand percent, yes, a thousand and ten percent for my men, I'll never refuse them, no, never, all I ask is some gratitude," rambled Albano. "But do I get the loyalty I give? No! I put my life on the line every night of the week and Sundays too, yes, I risk my mind and body, sacrifice all the glory so my men can become champions. All I ask is a thank you, Captain, nothing more, just thank you, Captain."

"And what do I get? Smart-ass bums spitting off their mouths. Well, I take guff from no bum, no punk can tell me things they did, so, yes, I'd agree I'm Manager of the Year and thank you for voting for me."

Uh, Captain, you finished second, thank you.

"Then who needs it!" Albano roared.

Buddy Rogers gained much attention for his corruption of Jimmy Snuka and other rule-breakers in the Mid-Atlantic area.

"You bet I'm damn proud of what I've done, but I won't be happy until half-wits like Rick Steamboat and Jay Youngblood are outta wrestling," sneered Rogers.

Sir Oliver Humperdink's deft maneuvering of Bugsy McGraw to the Florida TV title earned acclaim from fans and a fourth place finish.

"About time genius was recognized," said Humperdink. "Me and Bugsy are going straight for Race's title." □

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